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The Declaration of Independence.

Thomas Paine the author.





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THE DECLARATION OF INDEPENDENCE.

THOMAS PAINE THE AUTHOR.

A brief notice of Mr. Geo. Bancroft's assertion in the *Century* of July, and of Mr. J. G. Nicolay and Mr. Frank R. Stockton in the *Century* of September 1887.

The origin of the Declaration of Independence is still a mooted question if we do not allow the above named gentlemen and a few others the dogmatic assertion unsupported or at least only supported by one old man in his dotage—eighty years old. The law requires two witnesses. In the July number Mr. Bancroft repeats his error, which not a few fair minded persons had some reason to hope he would cease to prate, but the learned gentleman having been once mistaken seems not to have the moral courage or honesty to admit his blunder, though pointed out to him in unmistakable proof, yet he dogmatically persists in foisting it on the enlightened people of the nineteenth century, and would prove his egotistical blunder by trying to show the great friendship which he feigns to believe existed between Mr. John Adams and his pet hero, but carefully keeps out of sight the fact that Mr. Jefferson systematically drove Mr. John Adams when Mr. Adams was President (and when he should have been in his official chair) from the Presidential chair for more than six months. And again, he (Mr. Jefferson) caused Gen. Washington, through Mr. Frenan, to exclaim in bitter anguish of soul, "by God I had rather be in my grave than in my present situation." From the above facts one can scarce fail to see what a warm and real friendship must have ever after existed between these three gentlemen. Why does Mr. Bancroft keep these facts so carefully in the back ground. Simply perhaps that his demigod may receive worship from the masses. Again Mr. Bancroft says Mr. Jefferson consulted no author, but produced it from the fullness of his own mind; and the *New American Cyclopaedia* says he consulted newspapers and some European authors. Which is correct? Neither! He merely copied the draft handed him. It is far from pleasant for us to know that the future reviewer of the pages of the learned historian and the cyclopaedia will be forced in truth to say they are somewhat unreliable and visionary.

In the September *Century* there is a frontispiece picture which if intended for Gen. Washington, to say the least, is not a good picture of Washington and looks but little more like Mr. Jefferson than it does like President Lincoln, but even such a picture may be pleasing to hero worshipers.

Following the fine picture are two articles by Messrs J. G. Nicolay and Frank R. Stockton, both of which gentlemen make due obeisance to their idol, and parrot-like, repeat the hackneyed sound, learned from the keeper, Mr. Bancroft, perhaps, who, with a few others, are zealously laboring to hold the stolen laurel on the brow of their deified hero. If the learned gentlemen really believe what they seem so very anxious to have others believe and do not know that what they state is an untruth, in fact, they are to be pitied, but should inform themselves by reading Mr. Jefferson's works carefully. Gross blindness at this day is not commendable, and less so in the great. We believe that neither of the above named gentlemen nor any other of Mr. Jefferson's worshipers can prove, even by Mr. Jefferson's own writings, that he ever so much as hinted that he first wrote the original draft of the Declaration of Independence until after the death of Dr. Franklin and Thomas Paine, the only two persons besides Mr. Jefferson that knew who furnished the original draft, but as before noticed he did not dare to so much as hint at being its author, while Dr. Franklin and Mr. Paine were living. At the age of 66 and after Mr. Paine had been dead nearly three months, Mr. Jefferson says, in September, 1809, in answer to a proposition to publish his writings after mentioning many of them, he says: "I say nothing of numerous drafts of reports, resolutions, etc., drawn as a member of Congress or of the legislature of Virginia, such as the reports on the money mint of the United States, the acts of religious freedom, etc., etc. These have become the acts of public bodies. There can be no personal claim to them. He says the same of the Declaration of Independence, (Jefferson's works, volume v, page 466.) In May, 1819, he (Mr. Jefferson) repeats the same account as above given. Mr. Paine has now been dead about ten years. He makes no claim yet that he was the author of it (the Declaration of Independence), but in this same account pledges himself to heaven and earth for the truth of the statement—(Jefferson's works, volume vii, page 123.) He is now 76 years old, but still too young and modest to make the claim. In January, 1821, he, indirectly and with great ambiguity, hints at being the author. He says (he being chairman of the committee) the committee for drafting the Declaration of Independence desired me to do it. It was accordingly done. He is now 78 years old. In August, 1823, he says: "I drew it," but now he drops his oath to heaven and earth and is now 80 years old. From the above we see that it required more than 45 years for Mr. Jefferson to work up his little vanity to so far forget the honor of a gentleman as to rob his deceased friend of his just laurels to adorn his own

brow. From all the facts, there is no doubt that the original draft was Mr. Paine's Common Sense systematized into a Declaration of Independence by Mr. Paine and handed to Mr. Jefferson, who only copied it. Any fair minded person that will compare Common Sense and the Declaration of Independence will see that the matter, in fact, is the same. Mr. Paine wrote his Common Sense to bring the minds of the people up to a separation from England, and by thus educating the masses he well knew that Congress would then be urged forward to declare a separation and when the time came he had his draft ready for the committee. No, gentleman, the original draft of the Declaration of Independence was no doubt as above stated, formulated from Common Sense by the man who had been a soldier with Washington, and, who, in 1780 gave his last \$500. hard money, when a Continental dollar was worth only about one cent, to feed our starving, freezing soldiers, and who, early in 1781 went with Col. John Laurens (at his own expense), to France, and they jointly obtained a loan of \$2,500,000 in silver of Louis XVI, and brought it home. The soldiers are fed, paid and clothed; Yorktown is attacked, Lord Cornwallis surrenders, the British power is broken by the causes put in motion by the patriotic statesman, who had on hands the business of a World, and this, while the Monticello designer was snug at home with his slaves planing bed curtains. According to Mr. J. G. Nicolay Mr. Jefferson himself learned before his death (what many others knew long before) when he says of himself: "I am now taught to know my true standard," which was that of a third rate lawyer and a zealous and adroit partisan whom his admirers have ever worshiped as their pattern or model saint and whose vanity he knew had caused him to filch from off the brow of his deceased friend his just laurels to place them upon his own vain brow. Far more honorable would it have been for the Celtic Solon if he had ever continued to "plan valances (bed curtains) and make gate latches." Those who at first feigned to believe the untruth knew it was but a mere assumption of Mr. Jefferson, but heard or told it so often that they came to believe the yarn a truth. All such are to be pitied, not blamed. In conclusion we may say without fear of truthful refutation that Mr. Thomas Paine furnished the original draft of the Declaration of Independence and that Mr. Jefferson only copied it.

For further proof see "Junius Unmasked," a small work printed by John Gray & Co., Washington, D. C. E.

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